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SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: GOVERNMENT ELIMINATES MOST CAVEATS ON
TROOPS IN AFGHANISTAN AND IRAQ

REF: SKOPJE 1097 AND PREVIOUS

¶1. (SBU) The GOM approved in a closed government session on November 22 the elimination of five of seven caveats currently in force for Macedonian troops supporting ISAF operations in Afghanistan (reftel) and Macedonian soldiers serving in Iraq. Of the two remaining caveats, one prohibits Macedonian troops from carrying out "an order, the execution of which would constitute a criminal act according to Macedonian law or which would be contrary to human rights conventions or the Law of Armed Conflict." The second caveat prohibits those forces from "carrying out operations aimed at demolishing bridges, tunnels, dams or dikes, and other infrastructure objects of significance." The two remaining caveats will be incorporated into language for parliamentary approval of future troop deployments to Afghanistan and Iraq.

¶2. (SBU) The five caveats eliminated, according to the MOD, prohibited Macedonian troops from:

- a.) Carrying out offensive operations planned with the purpose of capturing territory or part of a territory inhabited by a civilian population and in which there is a risk of possible collateral damage to that population.
- b.) Carrying out operations planned to be executed on territory or part of a territory where NBC agents might be present.
- c.) Carrying out operations in religious buildings, museums, and other sites containing cultural and/or archaeological heritage.
- d.) Carrying out riot control operations.
- e.) Training host country national security forces.

¶3. (SBU) COMMENT: This decision reflects the GOM's determination to prove its dependability as a U.S. and NATO ally. Both the MOD and the MFA have been supportive from the beginning of our requests to reduce or eliminate the caveats, and the new Minister of Defense made it a priority issue to be resolved prior to the Riga Summit. Although the GOM

decision was unanimous, it is likely that the decision will be questioned and criticized in the local media, which already have suggested that reducing the caveats would lead to risky combat deployments for Macedonian troops currently serving in support positions with the German and UK contingents in ISAF. We recommend that the Macedonians receive positive recognition at the Riga Summit for this decision, which appears to put them in the vanguard of countries that have significantly reduced or eliminated caveats on their troops supporting ISAF.

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